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ABSTRACT

Data concerning child care in Dane County, Wisconsin, as of 1986 are provided in this report. Section I describes needs and services in terms of day care needs, the number of children enrolled in day care programs, and gaps between needs and services. Section II describes fees charged for full-day care in centers and in licensed and registered family day care homes. Focusing on day care center employees, section III concerns staff hourly wages, staff experiences, and educational level of day care staff. Sections IV and V, respectively, discuss family day care and tuition assistance. Section VI explores special issues related to rural child care. Section VII offers conclusions, asserting that the two major unresolved issues facing child care in 1986 were those of program quality and planned increase of service provision. Recommendations for resolving those issues are advanced. (RH)

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CHILD CARE UPDATE: 1986

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I. NEEDS AND SERVICES

Child Care Needs

As the 1980's draw to a close, the American family has undergone a profound change. As both the number of single-parent families headed by working men and women and the number of two-parent families in which both parents work full time increase, and as more heads of families on public assistance begin to enter employment and training programs, the need for quality child care services has become a major focus of the new American family.

These family changes are evident in Dane County. The most recent information taken from the 1980 census and its 1985 update is that 43% of the mothers with children under the age of three, 58% of mothers with children under six years of age and fully 74% of mothers with school age children are in the work force. In addition, while accurate statistics on the number of fathers who are single parents of young children are not available, both joint custody situations and families in which fathers have sole custody are growing trends. In the past, a large portion of these families' child care needs would have been met by other family members such as a sister or grandparent. Today fewer families, especially in a highly mobile area like the City of Madison, live near other family members who could offer child care. The best estimate is that at most 20% of the child care needed in Dane County for working parents is provided within the family.

What are the child care needs in Dane County? Based on the above information and actual population figures and estimates for Dane County the following picture emerges:

Table 1
Child Care Needs, 1986

Age Group	Total Population Dane County	Madison (51%)	Out of Madison (49%)	Needing Care In Dane County
0-1 Infants/Toddlers	9352	4813	4539	4021
2-5 Preschoolers	18145	9339	8806	8419
0-5 Subtotals	27497	14152	13345	12440
6-12 School-Age	29095	14975	14120	17224
0-12 TOTALS	56592	29127	27465	29664

Source: Population information from the State of Wisconsin, Department of Administration.

The numbers in the right hand column of Table 1 represent the best estimate of the numbers of infants and toddlers, preschoolers, and school-age children in Dane County who need day care services. These are based on the most current census information and are adjusted by both local and national statistics for mothers who are employed. While use of the data for employed mothers ignores those instances where single employed fathers are the sole support of their households, use of the percentages of working mothers is commonly regarded as the most conservative delimiting statistic used in determining the numbers of children requiring day care services.

Child Care Services

Families in Dane County have a wide range of child care services from which to choose. During 1985-1986 there were 61 full-day centers and 71 part-day centers in operation. In the fall of 1985 and spring of 1986, 2 new full-day centers opened (Magic Penny East and Kids' Play), 2 closed (Children's World and Eggplant Co-op), and one became state certified (Lamb of God). In that same period, 4 part-day preschools closed (Church Day Nurseries-Asbury United Methodist, Church Day Nurseries-First Baptist, Highland School, and Mary Kay Creative School).

During 1985 - 1986 children were also cared for in 128 licensed and 318 registered family day care homes. The number of family day care homes increased substantially since last year's update -- registered homes increased by 11% and licensed homes increased by 10%.

In addition to slots available in centers and family day care homes, school-aged children receive before and after school care in specialized programs such as the After School Day Care Association, which operates programs in the Madison Public Schools, and the YMCA, which operates Youth Development Centers in several locations throughout the county.

Table 2 shows the number of children enrolled in child care programs during 1985 - 1986. (Note: these numbers reflect actual enrollments, not the licensed capacities of these programs.)

Table 2
Number of Children Enrolled in Child Care Programs

Full-Day Centers	3587
Part-Day Centers	3100
Registered Family Day Care	1043
Licensed Family Day Care	1202
TOTAL IN REGULATED CARE	8932

Source: 4-C Rate and Enrollment Survey, 1986 (N = 61 full-day centers, 62 part-day centers, 60 licensed and 33 registered family day care homes responding).

The number of children enrolled in child care programs in Dane County has increased every year since 4-C began its "child care census" in 1974. This year there are 8% more children in regulated care than the number reported last year.

Comparing Needs and Services

To what extent do the day care services available in Dane County meet the needs of children and their families? In the table below, the number of children in regulated care is compared to the estimated number of children needing day care services.

Table 3
Difference Between Needs and Services

Ages Of Children	Needs for Child Care[1]	Children in Regulated Care[2]	Percentage of Children Needing Care Served
0-1	4021	1325	33%
2-5	8419	4867	58%
6-12	17224	1509	9%

Sources: 1. From Table 1 above -- Dane County Census adjusted by local and national statistics of numbers of families needing child care services due to employment.

2. 4-C Rate and Enrollment Survey, 1986.

While many needs are still unmet, the gap between child care needs and services appears to be closing. Though the percentage of preschoolers and school-age children in need of child care and being served in regulated centers and homes is virtually unchanged since last year's "Child Care Update," the situation for infant and toddler care has changed dramatically. Due to both the increased number of registered and licensed family day care homes and increased slots in full-day center programs, the number of infants and toddlers in regulated care has increased almost three fold. Currently, 33% of the infants and toddlers who need child care are in Dane County's regulated centers and homes.

II. COST OF CHILD CARE

The fees charged parents for child care continue to climb steadily. The weekly rates charged for preschoolers in full-day centers increased by 5% since last year. The cost of center preschool care has increased by 4 to 5% annually since 1982. The fees charged for infant and toddler care in full day centers have gone up 1% since last year.

In family day care, weekly infant/toddler and preschool care charges have increased by 7% and 8% respectively; hourly charges (a rate structure often used by family day care providers) have increased 12% for preschoolers and 7% for infant and toddlers. In the past, $4 to $7 has separated the weekly fees of registered and licensed providers -- this year registered and licensed providers are charging virtually identical rates.

Table 4
Fees Charged for Full-Day Care

In Full Day Centers	Mean	Range
Weekly rates for infants/toddlers	$74.50	$55 - $90
Weekly rates for preschoolers	$62.40	$50 - $77.50
In Family Day Care (Licensed & Registered)		
Weekly rates for infants/toddlers	$65.50	$35 - $90
Weekly rates for preschoolers	$61.50	$35 - $90
Hourly rates for infants/toddlers	$ 1.65	$1.00 - $2.15
Hourly rates for preschoolers	$ 1.59	$1.00 - $2.75

Source: 4-C Rate and Enrollment Survey, 1986

The average rate charged parents in part-day centers is difficult to determine, since such programs tend to offer a wide variety of rates. Centers with morning or afternoon programs charge different fees based on the hours or days of care that are provided each week. Costs are also determined by the week, month, or semester. By averaging all the different rates charged by part-day centers (54 part-day centers reported 109 different rates in the 4-C Survey) to establish an average daily rate, the average cost in part-day programs is $5.63/day, an increase of over 4% since last year. The range of fees charged in part-day programs was from $2.50 to $10.00 per day.

III. CHILD CARE CENTER EMPLOYEES

Low wages are responsible for two of the most critical problems facing child care today: high staff turnover and the shortage of experienced staff. Poor compensation results in turnover within programs by forcing trained staff to leave the field in order to earn enough to support their own families. According to the most recent 4-C survey, 17% of the teaching staff at full-day centers and 28% of those who teach at part-day centers hold down a second job. Little economic incentive exists to enable experienced teachers to make a life-long career commitment to early childhood education. And although the level of education of caregivers is higher than the national average, day care wages are in the lowest 5% of all workers, according to one survey of workers in Michigan.

The average wages for different categories of day care staff are found in the following table:

Table 5
Staff Hourly Wages

Full Day	Current Average	Range	Average Starting	Range
Administrators	$7.00/hour	$4.61-13.00/hour	$6.07/hour	$4.00-11.25/hour
Program Directors/ Lead Teacher	6.16	4.04-10.00	5.17	4.00-11.25
Teachers	4.66	3.50- 7.50	4.28	3.35- 7.00
Assistant Teachers	4.02	3.35- 5.25	3.88	3.35- 5.00
Part Day				
Administrators	$7.33/hour	$3.57-10.00/hour	$6.11/hour	$5.00- 7.50/hour
Program Directors/ Lead Teacher	7.67	4.90-15.00	6.53	5.00- 7.50
Teachers	6.69	3.35-10.39	5.92	3.35-10.00
Assistant Teachers	5.06	3.35- 7.33	4.43	3.35- 5.25

Source: 4-C Rate and Enrollment Survey, 1986.

Staff turnover in day care work is a major problem which affects staff morale, efficient running of programs, and continuity of care given to children. Staff turnover in part-day centers in Dane County for the period 1985-86 was 25%, an increase over the 1984-85 period when the turnover rate was 20%. Staff turnover in full-day centers for 1986 was 28%, a decrease from last year when the turnover rate was 33%. (Since some centers do not report every year, these figures most be taken as estimates only). However, the retention of experienced staff continues to be a concern.

In Dane County 58% of the teachers in part-day programs and 70% of the teachers in full-day programs have been at their present center less than 3 years. Of the people who had left a day care center during the last year, 29% found employment outside of center-based care. It is not known if they left the early childhood field altogether, however it does represent a significant loss of availability of experienced day care workers to the centers of Dane County.

Table 6
Staff Experience

	Full-Day	Part-Day
% of staff working 1 year or less	37%	36%
% of staff working 2-3 years	33%	22%
% of staff working more than 3 years	30%	42%

Source: 4-C Annual Rate and Enrollment Survey, 1986.

It is interesting to note that the average number of years at a center for directors is 6 years for full-day programs and 8 years for part-day programs. In addition, 28% of the directors of full-day programs and 29% of the directors of part-day programs have been at their center for over 10 years. The stability of center directors is undoubtedly a positive factor in what can be viewed as the overall problem of staff turnover.

Training of Center Staff/Costs/Needs

In addition to the state educational requirements for working in a day care center, child care teachers must complete fifteen hours of additonal training in early childhood education. This training must be in courses or workshops that meet the approval of the Department of Health and Social Services. This training is in addition to the inservice training (two hours per month for each month of program operation per year) mandated for day care centers.

The educational background, training level, and years of experience of teachers of young children determines the training and continuing educational needs of teachers. These factors directly impact on the cost to the teacher, and perhaps the program, of this training. More experienced teachers perhaps will need more advanced and costly educational opportunities than those teachers who are just entering the field. Currently, 74% of the teachers in full-day programs and 67% of the teachers in part-day programs in Dane County have some college work, a college degree, or an advanced degree, which would indicate a need for more advanced course work to fufill continuing education requirements.

Table 7 gives an overview of the educational levels of current day care staff in Dane County, representing 588 workers in 94 centers.

Table 7
Educational Levels of Child Care Staff

	% of Full-Day Center Staff-1986	% of Part-Day Center Staff-1986
Some high school work	2%	1%
High school diploma	20%	12%
Some college work	31%	13%
College degree	38%	46%
M.A., M.S. or other advanced degree	5%	8%

Costs of Available Training in Dane County

Day care teachers in Dane County, and Madison in particular, are fortunate in the availability of a large number and variety of training and continuing education programs. Many agencies located in Madison offer workshops on topics which would be applicable to the needs of day care teachers. Many of these workshops are given at no or minimal cost to participants and MATC courses are relatively inexpensive. City funding is available on a limited basis to workers in Madison's city-certified centers.

When teachers need more advanced level training, it may be available at considerable additional cost. The University of Wisconsin-Madison and Edgewood College in Madison offer course work in early childhood education. For those day care teachers who do not live in the Madison area taking credits from either of these institutions would also involve the additional costs of travel, and perhaps of lodging.

The average yearly wage of a day care teacher in a full-day center is approximately $8388.00 (based on $4.66/hour, 7 1/2 hours a day, 5 days/week, 12 months). When it is recognized that many teachers are making less than the federal poverty level wage, the need for low cost training and stipends for continuing education becomes more critical.

IV. FAMILY DAY CARE

Dane County is among the richest in the nation in the number of regulated family day care homes. There are 318 registered homes, 128 licensed homes, and approximately 72 homes that belong to one of four family day care "systems." The quality of the homes varies, but clearly there are many that are of very high quality. There is some overlap between providers--some are members of a system, registered or licensed, and City-certified. Few providers in Dane County are totally isolated and operating entirely without a support service.

Evaluation of the registered homes occurs annually. In the fall of 1985, 88% of the homes studied were found to be in substantive compliance with the standards. The registration system -- a Dane County purchase of service contract with 4-C -- has helped stabilize a system of formerly certified homes and newly recruited homes. About 75% of the registered homes renew their registrations annually.

Licensing is performed by the Department of Health and Social Services. Approximately 36 new homes were licensed in 1986 and 24 others left licensing, keeping the number of licensed homes fairly similar for the past two years.

City certification of family day care homes contributes greatly to the presence of higher quality -- for these providers must meet higher standards than either licensed or registered providers. All systems' homes are city certified.

Currently, the need for infant/toddler care far outstrips the capacity in either centers or regulated homes (about one-third of the need is met by regulated care). New homes to take care of infants and toddlers are needed. As well, new homes to take care of children who are mildly ill or who have handicapping conditions are needed.

Family day care recruitment takes place in 4-C's monthly "start-up" sessions, through outreach of each of the systems, and through informal contacts. To achieve the goal of having more providers available for infant/toddler or care for ill children, a more assertive recruitment program will need to take place.

One concern is that, as the homes have become more stable and more professional, rates have gone up considerably, especially in family day care system homes. Some attention will need to be paid to either subsidizing more families who use family day care or recruiting homes willing to serve low-income families at the price they can afford.

V. TUITION ASSISTANCE

County

Currently, 240 families with about 360 children, receive tuition assistance through the Dane County Department of Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) program. The SSBG funding reimburses day care costs for families who earn up to 70% of the state median income and who need child care because they are working or going to school. Families earning up to 82% of the state median may receive partial funding, but must make a co-payment themselves.

The waiting list for SSBG in Dane County is matched by similar waiting lists in over half of Wisconsin's counties. Dane County's waiting list peaked at a high of 700 families in the summer of 1986. Fully 3/4 of the current 150 families on the waiting list are AFDC families, whose child care costs can be partially paid (up to $160.00 a month) out of AFDC funds. The highest number of children served, with SSBG funds was 525 in 1984; the lowest (360) is the current year - and that number is not likely to be increased in 1987.

About 10% of the day care tuition assistance has been allocated for crisis respite care. In 1986, about $79,000 of the entire day care line item is targeted for "protective day care" and another $53,000 is granted to the Respite Center for short-term crisis/respite care to families. Whether or not this represents a deliberately planned new trend for county allocations or merely a "default" situation in which employment and training needs take a lower priority is unknown.

City

City tuition assistance is closely related to county funding, since families must first apply for and be declared ineligible for county funding. In 1986 there was a waiting list nearly all year for the $274,000 allocated. Approximately 110 families are served and another 40 - 50 remained on a waiting list until the last month of the year. City tuition assistance is paid at a rate equaling the average for City-certified centers. (Students beyond the first two years of college are ineligible for city funding as are families residing outside the city and those using a non-city certified center or home.)

Grants totalling $29,000 were allocated to city-certified programs in 1986 - and the funding of several purchase of service contracts helped offer direct and indirect services to families. City day care allocations represent direct investment in quality, as well, through certification and technical assistance to centers and family day care personnel.

University

After several years of recommendations, the University Child Care Tuition Assistance Program (CCTAP) has completed its first complete cycle.

Students pay $1.00 per semester in segregated fees to the CCTAP fund and allocations are made by the CCTAP committee. The total award per family cannot exceed $150 per semester.

During 1986, student families received funding in the amount of approximately $60,000. The CCTAP program is unique among Universities in the midwest.

United Way Venture Grant to 4-C

A venture grant for child care tuition assistance from the United Community Foundation through the United Way was awarded to 4-C for 1986-87.

Approximately $15,000 is to be spent for child care tuition assistance for low-income families engaged in work or training programs of the Red Cross, Centro Hispano or Madison Urban League, and/or living on the south side of Madison. Approximately 15 families will be served during the period from September, 1986 to August, 1987.

The dollar amount spent on all child care in regulated settings in Dane County in full and part-day centers and licensed and registered family day care is estimated to be at least $20,000,000. The entire amount of public tuition assistance is approximately $1,134,000. or about 6%, which means that the majority of families pay the entire cost of child care. Tuition costs for child care continue to be the fourth largest expenditure for many young families (after rent, food, and taxes). The expansion of tuition assistance by the University and the United Way is a step toward greater equity for those families who face the need to work and who lack resources to pay for child care.

VI. SPECIAL ISSUES: RURAL CHILD CARE

Child Care Outside Madison -- Two Profiles

In Dane County, a population shift is apparent. From 1970 to 1980, the percentage of the county's population living in the City of Madison has dropped from 59% to 53%. By 1990, it is estimated that half of the county's residents will live in the City of Madison and half will live in the other cities, villages, towns and rural areas of the county.

There appear to be several reasons for this change. Families seem to want a "small town atmosphere" with the perceived lower cost of living and lower tax rates. Increasingly, there are jobs in the county's rural areas and for those who commute to work, the cost of commuting has decreased with the lower gas prices.

With this population shift, the assessment of child care needs and services in rural Dane county has become important. As examples, two different areas, one a small city and the other a village, will be discussed below.

Stoughton

The population in the city of Stoughton grew by over 24% between 1970 and 1980, and is expected to grow by another 20% by 1990. This growth has been accompanied by an expanding job market. One "industrial park" is in place and a second one is planned.

Stoughton Trailers, with a workforce of about 750 and a good affirmative action plan, has attracted many female employees. According to the Stoughton Chamber of Commerce, Nabisco Foods' workforce of 260 employees is between 50 and 60% female. The Stoughton Hospital also employs many women. Downtown there is a major revitalization drive to bring in craft and jewelery shops and a new grocery. Many women are employed at the General Motors assembly plant about 18 miles from Stoughton. Other large employers include Nelson Industries and Uniroyal.

To meet these families' child care needs, Stoughton has three full-day child care centers, two part-day centers (and two Head Start programs), five registered and one licensed family day care homes. How well do the city's current child care facilities meet the community's day care needs? In the table below, the number of children in regulated care is compared to an estimate of those children needing care. To estimate the number of children needing care, the information from the Stoughton School District's pupil census was adjusted by local and national information on the number of mothers who are employed in the workforce.

Table 8
Child Care Needs and Services in Stoughton

Ages of Children	Children in Regulated Care[1]	Needs for Child Care[2]	Percentage of Children Needing Care Currently Being Served
0-1 (infants/toddlers)	27	215	13%
2-5 (preschoolers)	147	326	45%
6-12 (after-school)	74	815	9%
TOTAL:	248	1356	

Sources:
1. 4-C Annual Rate and Enrollment Survey of Dane County conducted in April and May of 1986. These numbers do not include one nonregulated preschool program that is part of a church school with an enrollment of 67 preschoolers.
2. Stoughton School Census adjusted by local and national estimates of numbers of families needing child care services due to employment.

How can existing services be expanded? At present there are only 17 infant slots in the city's full-day centers. Expansion of infant care in centers and especially in family day care, where infant and toddlers traditionally receive care, is needed. Even with the additional preschoolers cared for in the church related preschool, care is available for only 66% of the preschool children. Perhaps the employers mentioned above could band together to form a consortium to operate an employer-sponsored day care center or a system of family day care homes to meet the needs of employees. For school-age children needing before and after school care, the city's 3 full-day centers are offering care for 71 children -- certainly they are doing their "share." Additional school age care could come from expanded family day care and more realistically, development of a program in the children's schools similar to that of Madison's After School Day Care Association. Finally, no existing home or center is currently offering second or third shift child care This care is definitely needed by the employees of the Stoughton Hospital and other manufacturing companies (Uniroyal, Nabisco, and Stoughton Trailers all have additional shifts).

Waunakee

The village of Waunakee has experienced phenomenal growth in recent years. From 1970 to 1980, the population grew by 77%, and it is estimated that by 1990 it will grow by another 17%.

At present Waunakee is expanding the employment options within the village. Waunakee has just formed an industrial development corporation and is actively promoting its downtown area as a source of new business. The campaign to get village residents to shop locally has as its theme, "We can shop at home." In addition to small service businesses, the village is attempting to attract larger employers with its expanding industrial park. Currently, two companies employ large numbers of women: Marshall Erdman & Associates, which has just undertaken a 6-million dollar expansion, and the Nord Gear Corporation.

It appears that relatively large numbers of Waunakee's families commute to jobs outside the village. These families have the option of finding child care either in Waunakee or near their place of employment. Those who are employed in Waunakee must seek child care services in the village.

To meet the child care needs of both groups of families, there are three part-day centers, one full-day center, two registered and two licensed family day care homes in Waunakee. How well do these services meet the needs of Waunakee's families? The table below is similar to the table developed for Stoughton in that the number of children in regulated care is compared to an estimate of those needing care. Again the school census data is used as a starting point and is then adjusted to take into account the numbers of working mothers.

Table 9
Child Care Needs and Services in Waunakee

Ages of Children	Children in Regulated Care[1]	Needs for Child Care[2]	Percentage of Children Needing Care Currently Served
0-1 (infants/toddlers)	9	90	10%
2-5 (preschoolers)	88	140	63%
6-12 (after-school)	26	550	5%
TOTAL:	123	780	

Sources: 1. 4-C Annual Rate and Enrollment Survey

2. Waunakee public and private school survey adjusted by local and national estimates of numbers of families needing child care.

In what ways should these existing services be expanded? For those non-commuting employees and those who do commute but choose to purchase care close to home, more infant/toddler care in family day care homes is needed. Coverage of needed care for preschoolers appears to be adequate, especially when it is assumed that many families find care close to their jobs outside the village. By its very nature, school age care for children before and after school must be located near the child's school, regardless of the location of a parent's work. Clearly, more school age care is needed in Waunakee. As in Stoughton, the existing full-day center is offering such care. Expanded school-age care in family day care and especially in the public and private elementary schools is needed.

Sources: 1. Dennis R. Domack, Community Development Agent, University of Wisconsin Extension - Dane County.

2. Myron Wilcox, Stoughton Chamber of Commerce.

VII. CONCLUSION

A great many issues continue to plague the child care field: lack of some kinds of child care (for infants and toddlers, for shift workers, for school-age children), low wages and high turnover of staff, and lack of even distribution of high quality care. Most of the problems facing child care noted in last year's "Update" paper continue, but may not be as intense in 1986. Insurance costs continue to rise for centers (upwards of 150% on the average) and family day care providers faced a $100 increase in the basic liability policy available through the statewide Wisconsin Early Childhood Association. Availability is not the biggest problem in Wisconsin, but though many insurance experts predict a leveling off of rate increases, affordability will still be a problem for low-income family day care providers and for centers just starting up.

The lack of infant care, noted in last year's "Update," has been ameliorated somewhat by the opening of at least four new centers in the fall of 1986 that accept children under 2 years of age. (The new centers are not counted in the total of full- and part-day centers since they were not in existence at the time of the Rate and Enrollment Survey.) An actual "count" of infants/toddlers in family day care was made this year, rather than the usual estimate, and far more children under age 2 are being served in family day care than had been previously estimated. However, the lack of spaces for these very young children still is an issue that needs to be part of planned development.

Care for sick children was addressed in 1986 by the opening of a "drop in" facility at Madison General Hospital (Ginger Ail) that can accept up to 12 children who are ill. In addition, 4-C sponsored an all-day training event on the topic of caring for mildly ill children which attracted approximately 20 providers. In 1987 4-C will initiate an in-depth study of care for ill children and try to work with others to further expand the options for parents.

Finally, employer-supported child care has changed somewhat. More than 30 employers attended the breakfast seminar on the topic of Employer-Supported Child Care; about 35 employers have considered one of the child care options for their employees; 4-C has signed new contracts with Allstate and National Cash Registers to perform specialized referral services for their employees;

and an international corporation has begun to market a voucher system for several companies in Dane County. A new on-site center for state employees (Kids' Play) opened in downtown Madison in the spring of 1986. No other new on-site employer-sponsored centers began in 1986, but there appears to be greater awareness concerning the options available.

The two major unresolved issues facing child care in 1986 appear to be that of quality and planned development.

Quality

While much has been written about quality child care--what it means, what is needed to obtain it, how expensive it may be--the striving for quality child care still is somewhat elusive. Understanding quality components (such as low student/teacher ratios and small group size) is fairly widespread. Less well known is how to achieve an evenness of quality throughout the community and within individual programs.

One might argue that only highly trained professionals can offer quality child care, and that such care will need to be fundamentally supported by society to the same extent public schools are supported (and with comparable wages for the teachers involved). A more pragmatic approach says that child care comes in all shapes and sizes, and what is needed is a systematic way to "develop" quality to the highest extent possible within any given program. The City of Madison's new day care certification standards clearly address the quality elements that need to be in place before a center can be re-certified or newly certified. Programs who cannot avail themselves of these standards (because they are outside the City or do not meet the organizational requirements) could well embark on a similar program of self-certification to good advantage.

There is a continuum of quality which ranges from the basic care and protection of children (which might be called "decent" care) to programs which have good outcomes for children, for parents, and for the programs ("excellent" care). There is need for ample child care options for a variety of parents with different value stances. There is also need for recognition that decent care will be acceptable for some families. Of concern to the child care community is the fact that some providers do not even offer the best in basic care and protection and are not challenged to offer quality care. Equally of concern are those providers who claim to offer "super" child care and are often not challenged to document such claims.

Family day care quality varies as much as center quality, but the perception may be that only family day care system homes are of high quality. The truth is, almost all regulated homes in Dane County have access to a number of resources that can enable them to reach higher standards of care: training, toy and equipment loan, access to consultation, support groups, and Food Program participation. Family day care providers are a solid part of the child care community, and an increasing number of them are highly professionalized. The benefit to the community of having many high quality homes available to serve families is somewhat offset by the fact that low-income families may have difficulty finding care they can afford.

Can a consensus be reached about what consitutes quality child care, particularly if we allow for variations and differences to meet different family needs? Probably yes, but only if there is recognition that good day care comes in different forms--and that one key ingredient in quality is the matching of beliefs and values between the programs/providers and the

families being served. Programs that achieve higher levels of quality generally have more resources than parent fees alone--such as grants, volunteers, or free rent. In programs without such outside resources, there may be a tendency to substitute educational gimmicks for the more costly low child/staff ratios or parent involvement aspects of a quality program. Achieving higher quality and consistency county-wide will be a challenge, but the lack of such attempts would be unconscionable. The effects of bad day care on children are simply too great.

Recommendations:

1. There should be more community recognition of providers who meet authentic, provable "higher quality" standards. Those centers who are City-certified and receive re-certification should be publicly acknowledged. Those programs that become accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) should be recognized. Family day care homes that meet higher level standards should be noted.

2. Quality child care should be a stated goal of all regulated child care providers, with more emphasis in training programs and workshops and consultations on articulating that statement of quality. In addition to City certification, other public and private funds should be allocated to centers and family day care homes to help them work toward higher quality day care services.

Planned Development

Many people continue to express an interest in offering child care services in Dane County. In the past two years, 52 groups or individuals contacted 4-C about starting full- or part-day child care centers. Group start-up meetings for potential family day care providers were held 20 times with a total of 88 people attending in the past two years.

An unprecented number of new centers began in the fall of 1986 (six full-day centers and seven part-day centers). At present it is unclear how many children will actually be enrolling in these centers, and some--for lack of appropriate planning or increased competition in a given area--may not be able to survive financially. Most of the new centers that open have done some market research and believe they can attract a sufficient number of parents to reach a breakeven point fairly early in the first few months of operation. When centers take community resources to open (such as licensing staff time) and don't succeeed, it is a kind of "planned development" that may not adequately meet the needs of families.

More day care financial "backers" have arisen, including state and local development corporations and financial institutions such as the National Cooperative Development Bank. Brokers who help new day care providers access financial backing are also playing a part in the rapid development of new centers. These "new" players in the development of child care may be accustomed to providing financial underpinnings for entirely different services (for example, the Farm Home Administration, that has customarily made farm loans, now has loans available for day care). More clear expectations from child care planners need to be relayed to potential funders of new day care about what is ideal growth, appropriate location of care and types of care needed, while recognizing that the "free market" still controls day care to a great extent.

Recommendation:

1. Key child care planning groups (4-C, City, County, United Way, Department of Health and Social Services/Licensing) should meet in a planning session annually which addresses child care program growth, location, and unmet needs. Potential financial backers of new child care should be invited to hear concerns raised at such a planning meeting (for example, the implications for the community if all new centers are operated under proprietary auspices).

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